

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2371
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 19965

TEL AVIV FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UR, US
SUBJECT: JEWISH CULTURAL AFFAIRS SYMPOSIUM

REF: (A) MOSCOW 19794, (B) MOSCOW 19759, (C) MOSCOW 16556
(NOTAL)

1. AS DEPARTMENT IS PRESUMABLY AWARE FROM NEWS REPORTS, THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS SYMPOSIUM ITSELF TURNED OUT TO BE A NON-EVENT. NEARLY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE WERE ARRESTED AS THEY LEFT THEIR APARTMENTS ON THE MORNING OF THE 21ST. SOME 20 MUSCOVITE JEWISH DISSIDENTS NEVERTHELESS MET IN FRONT OF THE MOSCOW SYNAGOGUE AT 10:00 A.M. (ALSO PRESENT WERE LARGE NUMBERS OF KGB TYPES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOREIGN PRESS). THE SYMPOSIUM WAS FINALLY CONVENED, SYMBOLICALLY, AT THE HOME OF G. ROZENSHTEYN. IT CONSISTED MOSTLY OF READING AND APPROVAL OF AN OPEN LETTER OF PROTEST TO THE MINISTER OF CULTURE. THE LETTER CALLED ON THE AUTHORITIES TO ALLOW THE SYMPOSIUM TO TAKE PLACE UNDER REASONABLE CONDITIONS. IT IS REMARKABLE PRIMARILY FOR THE FACT THAT IT WAS SIGNED BY
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MEMBERS OF ALL THE MAJOR GROUPS IN THE MUSCOVITE REFUSENIK COMMUNITY (INCLUDING LERNER AND LEVICH WHO RARELY PARTICIPATE IN SUCH VENTURES) AS WELL AS SAKHAROV, WHO OF COURSE IS NOT JEWISH. THE SYMPOSIUM THEN ADJOURNED INDEFINITELY.

2. MOST OF THOSE ARRESTED WERE INTERROGATED ALL DAY DEC 21 AND ARE NOW UNDER HOUSE ARREST. THESE PEOPLE PRESUME THAT THE ARREST WILL CONTINUE UNTIL FRIDAY, DEC 24 (THE DAY SCHEDULED FOR THE DEMONSTRATION AT THE LENIN LIBRARY, REF B). THE HOUSES OF SEVERAL OF THOSE ARRESTED HAVE BEEN SEARCHED AGAIN AND AT LEAST FIVE PEOPLE ARE TO APPEAR DEC 23 AT THE KGB FOR AN ADDITIONAL INTERROGATION. WHILE THE SYMPOSIUM ITSELF IS NOW OVER WITH, WE ARE TOLD THAT THE AUTHORITIES MAY WISH TO TRY AND NIP IN THE BUD ANY ATTEMPT TO PROTEST THE FACT THAT THE SEMINAR WAS PREVENTED FROM TAKING PLACE.

3. IN AN APPARENTLY RELATED EPISODE, TWO OF MOSCOW'S MOST PROMINENT REFUSENIKS, SLEPAK AND LERNER, ARE ALSO NOW UNDER HOUSE ARREST. THE INVOLVEMENT OF SLEPAK IN THE SEMINAR WAS NIL, ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT LERNER'S NAME WAS ON THE LIST OF THOSE GIVING PAPERS. THE PAPER ITSELF, WE ARE TOLD, WAS A STRAIGHTFORWARD EXPOSITION OF ONE ASPECT OF SOVIET JEWISH CULTURE AND WAS MUCH LESS OFFENSIVE THAN THOSE OF MANY OTHER PARTICIPANTS.

4. SLEPAK'S APARTMENT WAS SEARCHED ALL DAY DEC 21 AND HE REMAINS UNDER HOUSE ARREST. IN CONTRAST TO THE OTHERS UNDER HOUSE ARREST, WHO CAN RECEIVE VISITORS, HIS APARTMENT IS BLOCKED BY THE KGB AND PEOPLE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RING THE DOOR BELL (OR EVEN ENTER THE HALL). REPORTEDLY MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED DOCUMENTS WERE TAKEN FROM THE SLEPAK APARTMENT.
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SLEPAK IS SAID TO BELIEVE THAT THIS ACTIVITY MAY ALL BE A PRELUDE TO HIS BEING ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE USSR, A GESTURE, HE IS SAID TO FEEL, ON THE PART OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER (SEE REFTEL C). WE HAVE NO WAY OF TELLING EVEN WHETHER SLEPAK GENUINELY BELIEVES THIS OR IF IT IS SIMPLY SCHADENFREUDE.

5. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, NO MUSCOVITE JEWISH ACTIVIST HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO MAKE OR RECEIVE ANY TELEPHONE CALLS TO OR FROM ABROAD FOR THE LAST THREE DAYS AND ALL ARE BEING OSTENTATIOUSLY TAILED.
MATLOCK

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